Towards HR Excellence in Research:
Implementing the Research Concordat at the University of Wolverhampton

Summary

During 2009 the University began working towards achieving the benchmark standards of the Research Concordat. We set-up a multi-disciplined, cross-university project team led by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research & Enterprise) and consisting of members from the University's research communities (Schools and Research Institutes), the Human Resources Department, academic development professionals (Institute for Learning Enhancement) and the Careers Advisory and Development Service.

We undertook a self-assessment review consisting of several components: a review of current people management and development policies/practices and the extent to which they meet the requirements of the Concordat in principle; a review of current people management and development policies/practices and the extent to which they meet the requirements of the Concordat in practice (i.e. actual operation); and exploration of any potential gaps in policy provisions or operational practices.

Our review involved a series of presentation and consultation events with relevant groups of researchers and research managers at various University sites. We provided information about the Concordat, explained what this meant for how we recruit, manage and develop our research staff and we sought their input into identifying and prioritising our development work towards more robustly meeting the Concordat standards. The results from this process were included in the final drafting of our Concordat Action Plan. A similar process was undertaken with the members of the University's Research Committee, the strategic steering body for the research function within our organisation. In addition, we participated in the CROS survey, factoring into the action plan the learning points from the insight gained.

Finally, we compared the Concordat review findings and action plan with the work undertaken during our audit of people management and development processes using HEFCE's Self-assessment Test (SAT). *(Note: The SAT input was particularly useful because it involved major input from 33 separate staff focus groups run across the whole University.)* Similarly, we factored in the 2011 feedback from the University's participation in the National Career Motivations Barometer Survey. (We incorporated early findings from a recently launched university-wide, strategic review of HR.)

By using such a deliberately integrated and cross-referenced approach, the University was seeking to maintain a specific focus on further improving the management and development of research staff whilst ensuring that this work is consolidated and embedded into the wider development of the University's strategic HR provision.

Over the next two years PVC Professor Ian Oakes will continue to lead the Concordat Workgroup, which will meet quarterly to monitor progress with our action plan implementation.

February 2012. V3.2.

Research Concordat Action Plan

	Aims	Actions	Responsibility	Target Timeframe
Recruitment & Selection; Recognition and Value (Principles 1 & 2)	Review use of fixed-term contracts in research within the University.	Reconsideration of the 'business model' and methodologies by which the University carries out target investment in research, with specific exploration of engagement and deployment of research staff.	New Research Strategy Group	Dec-2012
	Improve University procedures for recruiting, employing, retaining and ending FTCs (if/where they are necessary).	Establish and implement a Fixed Term Contract Policy (links to action below).	HR Dept. & new cross-University strategic HR workgroup	Sept-2012
	Further enhance redeployment process for those employees presently on FTC and facing contract review or closure in the future.	Development of a specific University Redeployment Policy, building on the strengths established by the Organisational Change Policy	HR Dept. & new cross-University strategic HR workgroup	Dec-2012
	Reinforce that research posts should only be advertised as fixed-term where there is a clearly recorded and justifiable reason.	Review of the University's Recruitment and Selection policy/practices, with specific audit/monitoring of the usage levels of fixed-term contracts.	HR Dept. & new cross-University strategic HR workgroup	Sept-2012
	Strengthening of the identity/organisational culture of the University-wide research community.	Introduction of an enhanced research-focussed website which provides information and advice for supporting the career development of Research staff and is in line with the corporate marketing and communications strategy, research strategy and related improvements.	Marketing and Comms (MaC), HR, ILE, Careers, Research Managers	March 2012
		Exploration and establishment of a virtual (on-line) University-wide researcher community in which all researchers can participate, communicate, share ideas & good practices and be part of a supportive, professional internal network.	New Project Group: Research managers, Researchers and MaC.	Summer 2012 & on-going

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Principles 1 & 2 cont...	Increase effectiveness of, and participation in, staff appraisal for both research staff and managers (P.I.s).	New project to review and enhance the University's staff appraisal scheme (process and usage levels) as a key strategic priority. This will enhance the linkage between staff and organisational priorities.	HR & stakeholder representatives (Project Group)	Sept 2012
	Raise the profile of research and researcher-related priorities within the University's new People (HR) strategy.	Review and renewal of University's People (HR) Strategy in line with introduction of new Corporate Strategy. (Drawing specific linkage to development and deployment of research staff.)	HR, HR Strategic workgroups and stakeholder representatives	Summer 2012
Support and career development; (Principles 3 & 4)	University Staff Mentoring Scheme which provides mentors to support all staff in career progression to be made more widely available to research staff.	Marketing and promulgation of the Scheme to all researcher and research managers. (Offering peer mentoring, hierarchical and co-mentoring.)	Staff Dev. Unit, ILE, Equality & Diversity Unit	On-going but review Autumn 2012
	Encourage researchers to engage pro-actively with career planning and raise their awareness of careers services available to them.	Develop careers webpages for researchers. Produce a more effective CES marketing approach for engaging with researchers. This will include distribution of leaflets to specifically target them, building greater engagement with the careers service. Inform research managers of the availability and nature of careers support for researchers.	Careers and Employment Services	On-going but review Summer 2012
	Increase participation in 'Personal and Career Development' programme run jointly by Careers & Counselling Units.	Gather feedback on reasons for non-attendance of applicants/low demand levels for sessions advertised. Amend provisions so as to be more useful / appealing to researchers.	Careers and Employment Services	Summer 2012& on-going

Research Concordat Action Plan

Support and career development; (Principles 3 & 4) continued...	Establish greater infrastructure and tools to support researcher development.	Further exploration of the benefits of the National Researcher Development Framework and the pending Enterprise Development Framework. Establish a research-focussed workgroup to scope and implement appropriate usage for all researchers.	New Research-Strategy Group, University's Research Committee, Director of Research, HR, SDU, ILE	Spring 2013
		Explore how we can best link the Development Framework and our staff appraisal process so as to further optimise the benefits of its use.	New Research Strategy Group, University's Research Committee, Director of Research, HR, SDU, ILE	Spring 2013
	Further improvements in Researcher, Research Manager and P.I. learning and development opportunities.	Review the national learning and development opportunities, identifying how best to engage our research community in these. (E.g. the *"Broadening Horizons"* programme, etc..). Introduce an appropriate range of these for research staff.	New Research Strategy Group, University's Research Committee, Director of Research, HR, SDU, ILE	Dec-2012
	Greater awareness and use of the newly established career grade structure and opportunities within the University.	Further marketing, information and careers coaching sessions for research staff. University-wide restatement of the importance of targeted and applied research as a Corporate Strategic Priority. Include a researcher staff development priority within the next revision of the University's Research Strategy. Introduction of support and monitoring processes to better enable research managers to target and prioritise the development of research staff.	New Research Strategy Group, University's Research Committee, Director of Research, HR, SDU, ILE	Completed within new Corporate Strategy. Spring 2013 November 2012

Research Concordat Action Plan

Researcher responsibilities (P5)	Enhance the support for, and planning of, the development of Researchers, Principal Investigators and Research Managers	Explore the introduction of compulsory Personal Development Portfolios (PDP) and/or CPD records for all research staff. Link PDP and/CPD to appraisal activity. For Research Managers, review the extent to which they have personal appraisal objectives relating to their activity in developing their research staff.	New Research Strategy Group, University's Research Committee, Director of Research, HR, SDU, ILE	Aug-2012 Apr-2013 Apr-2013
	Achievement of Athena Swan Charter status	To prepare a Bronze Institutional Application for submission in 2012/13.	Athena Swan Workgroup	June 2013
Diversity and Equality (Principle 6)	Ensure that the working conditions for researchers provide the flexibility necessary for successful research performance in line with legal requirements. Working conditions should allow both female and male researchers to combine family and work, children and career.	Appropriate diversity, work life balance, family friendly policies in place at the University: Review the extent to which these provisions are used by research staff and raise awareness/use of them.	New Research Strategy Group, HR, Equality and Diversity Unit, New HR Strategy workgroup	Aug-2012
	To offer the *'Managing your Academic Career for Women in SET'* across the University in order to provide an opportunity for women to examine existing skills, networks and preferences and to consider what next steps might be appropriate.	The Athena Swan Champion to attend UKRC and Vitae-related 'trainer training' in order to be able to offer the programme across the University. Launch the training, by way of in-house provision, across the University.	Athena Swan Workgroup	Autumn 2012

Review (Principle 7)	Run consultation event with researchers and research managers to explore the grass-root perspectives of the impact of our Concordat development work.	Undertake CROS survey, analyse results and review developmental priorities accordingly. Benchmark results against previous studies and the sector results.	Concordat Working Group	On-going and CROS 2013
	Publish the Concordat Action Plan and encourage feedback from all parties within University	Publish Action plan on the University's new Research website (launching March 2012)	PVC Prof Ian Oakes (or VC), Concordat Working Group, MaC,	March/April 2012
		Publish announcement article in WLV Insider staff magazine.	PVC Prof Ian Oakes (or VC), Concordat Working Group, MaC,	March/April 2012
	University to review and evaluate implementation of Action Plan as an on-going process: Where relevant, mainstreaming this workload into other standard University development & review processes in order to establish it as a self-driving priority.	Publish Action plan and establish a timetable of quarterly review meetings.	PVC, Director of Research, Concordat Working Group	March/April 2012, then On-going
		Launch new Research-focussed workgroup involving a larger volume of researchers and research managers. (N.B. This links to, and supports, actions stated earlier in this document.)	PVC, Director of Research, University's Research Committee	Summer 2012
		Establish a clear link between this work and the current 'Uni-wide' work to review/evolve the new HR Strategy. Brief the various HR work-groups therein on the priorities within the Concordat Action Plan (CAP) ensure workloads are co-ordinated and mutually supportive wherever possible.	HR, HR Strategy Work Groups, Concordat Work Group	Summer 2012
		Establish consideration of CAP priorities within standard University strategic/planning processes. (EG: Must be factored into the 2012/13 redevelopment of the University's Research Strategy and work towards the R.E.F.).	PVC, Director of Research, Research PIs, Concordat Working Group	Summer 2013

Review (continued...)	*From previous page…*	In next planning round, ensure that all relevant Schools and Research Institutes have objectives regarding how they support and drive forward the CAP agenda.	PVC, Director of Research, University's Research Committee, Schools & Depts.	2012/13 Planning round
		Explore adding a review of CAP progress to the University's Research Committee agenda (as a standing item).	PVC, Director of Research, University's Research Committee	May/June 2012

Summary of review findings follows…

Summary of Review Findings

Attribute reviewed	Current evidence / Indicators	Concordat Principle	Action by	Action status
Recruitment and selection processes for researchers to ensure compliance with best practice & legislation.	All recruitment and selection is undertaken based upon job descriptions that contains a person specification indicating the skills/knowledge and experience (competence) required for the role.	1, 2,	HR, Schools & Depts.	Further development scheduled
	Selection paperwork is completed and retained in line with specified time constraints.	1, 2,	HR, Schools & Depts.	Completed
	Competence-based shortlisting, interviewing and skill/knowledge assessment exercises are at the core of all selection processes.	1, 2,	HR, Schools & Depts.	Completed but due for review
	Feedback to unsuccessful candidates is provided based upon the above records of their performance in the process.	1, 2,	HR, Schools & Depts.	On-going
Recruitment & selection training for panel members	All staff involved in selection processes are required to complete training in competency-based interview techniques (and record keeping).	1, 2,	HR & SDU	On-going
Equality & Diversity compliance	Whenever possible, recruitment & selection panels are representative of the University's diversity-related demographics.	1, 2, 6	HR, Schools & Depts.	On-going
	Recruitment and selection policies/processes are subject to equality and diversity impact assessments.	1, 2, 6	HR	On-going but due for review
	All staff are required to undertake diversity and equality training.	1, 2, 6	HR & SDU	On-going
Transparency & fairness of pay and pay progression	HERA job evaluation is used to establish pay grading across the University.	1, 2, 6	HR, Schools & Depts.	On-going

From previous page…	Transparent salary scales / pay grades are published within the University and pay progression is compliant with the National Framework Agreement.	1, 2, 6	HR, Schools & Depts.	Completed
Reduced use of fixed-term contracts	The usage of fixed-term contracts is reduced / kept to a minimum; and only occurs where there is a justifiable reason. All FTCs are subject to periodic review during which any consideration of continuation/extension is scrutinised.	1, 2, 6	HR, Schools & Depts.	On-going and due for review
	Reduction of number of staff on successive FTC's, as well as making all employees permanent with 4 years+ continuous service.	1, 2, 6	HR	Completed but due for review
	The introduction of a new University Change Management policy and procedures, establishing greater focus on enhancing redeployment processes for any staff designated as "at risk of redundancy". This has improved redeployment levels.	1, 2,, 6	HR	April 2011 & on-going
	Following the new Change Management policy, the University plans to explore the introduction of a stand-alone Redeployment Policy, including a further refinement of the relevant processes by which redeployment (and retraining) are managed.	1, 2,, 6	HR	Planned
Researchers at the University are valued and their experience is evaluated	The University participates in the national Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS), in order to compare and benchmark the experience of its research staff with those in other UK universities.	2, 6, 7	Concordat Work Group	On-going
Researchers are a valued HR asset, and are equipped, supported and developed	The University has a Flexible Working Policy and procedures, enabling staff to explore various arrangements that best enable an effective work-life balance.	2, 3,	HR, Schools & Depts.	Initial introduction 2009 but on-going

University planned probation and induction programme	All new staff and their line managers are trained in, and issued with probation/ induction documents.	1, 2, 4, 5, 6	HR	On-going
Appraisal for research staff and research managers	All staff (including researchers) are required to participate in the University's Staff Appraisal Process and undertake 'appraisee' training	1, 2, 3, 4,	HR, Schools, Depts, RI's	On-going
	All managers (including researcher managers) are required to undertake staff appraisal training and to carry out regular staff appraisal with their team as a part of their role.	1, 2, 3, 4,	HR, Schools, Depts, RI's	On-going
Researchers are supported, trained and developed	The University offers a wide range of development opportunities for researchers through the Staff Development Unit. These provisions include skills & knowledge development relating to: project management; dissemination; information management; research development; governance; enterprise; technical research skills; and career planning & management.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6,	HR, Schools, Depts, RI's	On-going
Career development and progression opportunities for researchers	The University recognised the value of researchers by introducing a new UW9 graded post. This enhanced researcher career progression between junior roles (e.g. research assistants and associates) and senior positions (Research Fellow and Senior Fellows).	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6,	HR, Schools, Depts, RI's	2010/11 On-going
	Assessment and planning protocols have been introduced to facilitate researcher progression to the Research Fellow or to establish development plans that will enable progression in due course.	2, 3, 4, 5,	HR, Schools, Depts, RI's	2011 On-going

Researchers can access a programme of careers presentations and workshops.	In collaboration with ILE, the careers advisors offer introductory sessions to new research staff to raise awareness of our services, plus half-day sessions covering career planning and management in the 'Research Skills' programme. In response to feedback, we plan to offer a wider range of more in-depth activities for researchers in next academic year; Currently liaising with the Counselling Service to develop a short programme of personal and career development workshops for researchers. (P*art of ILE's programme of staff dev. for researchers.)*	4, 5	Careers and Emp. Services	On-going
	The Careers Centre has extended guidance to research staff, offering support with career planning and job application techniques, including feedback on CVs, applications, practice interviews and coaching on interview presentation skills. Provision is due for evaluation 2011/12. Training sessions for careers staff will be provided from Summer 2011 onwards, with the aim of ensuring that research staff are supported by careers staff in the most effective way. The Careers Information and Guidance Manager is to join the AGCAS (Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services) forum on working with research staff.	4, 5	Careers and Emp. Services	On-going
Researchers are made aware of the careers support available to them.	We need to publicise these services more effectively and proactively, through: involvement in the induction process; our website; by raising awareness of research supervisors, who can then make appropriate referrals.	4	Careers and Emp. Services	On-going
Information on career routes for researchers is made available/clearly signposted.	We are currently developing our careers library resources to cover information aimed specifically at researchers.	3, 4, 5	HR, Careers& Emp. Serv.	Sept-2011 & on-going

From previous page…	Careers new website has a section dedicated to researchers which will be published in Summer 2011. We are collaborating with HR Services on this.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	HR, Careers& Emp. Serv., ILE	On-going
Mentoring for researchers	SDU supports staff in acquiring a mentor or coach to support their development. The scheme has run successfully for a number of years.	3, 4, 5,	ILE/SDU	On-going
	Some Schools offer mentoring arrangements specifically for research staff. This practice is being expanded to benefit all researchers.	3, 4, 5,	ILE/SDU, Schools, RI's.	On-going
The Research Supervisors Development Programme	The University's Institute of Learning Enhancement (ILE) run and organise the Research Supervisors Development programme for staff members with research degrees to assist with their professional development that will equip them to support a research student throughout their research degree programme	3,4,5	ILE/SDU	On-going
Experienced Research Supervisors Programme	The University's Institute of Learning Enhancement (ILE) run and the next level up from the Research Supervisors Development Programme for Experienced Research Supervisors.	3,4,5	ILE/SDU	On-going
Research Skills Development Workshop Programme	This programme run by ILE (with input from Careers) assists in the skills development for early researchers actively engaged in completing their research programme.	3,4,5	ILE/Careers	On-going
Early Researcher Award Scheme	Provides a mechanism for identifying and supporting members of staff who are at the start of their research career and available to anyone in the University who is at the beginning of a postdoctoral career and provides funding for the individual research project or support to enhance wider research-related skills	3,5	HR/ILE/ URC	On-going

Adherence to, and promotion of, diversity and equality best practice and legislation in all aspects of researcher employment.	The University has long had established a high-profile Equality & Diversity, sponsored by Executive, which drives forward the University's E&D Strategy, all E&D policies, spread of best practice, compliance monitoring and reviews.	1, 2, 6	Executive, HR, EDU,	On-going
	Relevant, organisation-wide provisions in place in line with legislative requirements (includes diversity action plans, impact analysis, training provisions, monitoring and review processes, etc..)	1, 2, 6	Executive, HR, EDU,	On-going
	Appropriate fairness, equality and diversity policy provisions and processes are in place (to enable fair treatment, equal pay, equal access, flexible working, work-life balance, etc..) Work towards a formal, 'over-arching' Dignity at Work policy has been scoped and is due to commence during 2012.	1, 2, 6	Executive, HR, EDU,	Spring 2012 & on-going
	The HE National Pay Modernisation agenda was concluded within the University in 2006.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Executive, Schools, Depts, HR	Aug 2006
	Significant research undertaken within the University into "Woman in Research", which culminated in academic publication and organisational learning.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	ILE	Apr-2011
	Work to achieve recognition under the Athena Swann Charter began during 2010 and is schedule to conclude in mid-2012 with attainment of the Bronze Award.	1, 2, 3, 6,	Athena Swan Workgroup	On-going to 2013

Committee / Group Memberships (Concordat-related)

Athena Swan (Women in Research) Workgroup

Karen Bill, Associate Dean, SSPAL (Chair)
Helen Ashdown, STech
Prof Judith Burnett, (LSSC)
Luke Chilton, Personnel
Prof Glynis Cousin, Director, ILE
Dr Debra Cureton-Woodward, Mentoring, ILE
Dr Tracey Devonport, SSPAL
Dr Jaswinder Dhillon, SED
Kapil Dhokia, Athena Swan Intern
Dr Chris Fullwood, SAS
Dr Lynda Holland, STech
Prof Ann Holmes (DVC Academic)
Dr Sarah Jones, SAS
Prof Linda Lang, SHaW
Prof Laura Serrant-Green, Dir. of Research & Ent. SHaW
Prof Magi Sque, SHaW
Cindy Williams-Findlay, Equality & Diversity Unit
Miss Jill Morgan, ILE (Secretary)

Concordat Implementation Workgroup

Professor Ian Oakes, PVC, Chair
Prof John Darling, Director of Research
Prof Glynis Cousins, Director of ILE
Mr Reg Probert, Personnel
Ms Lesley Hassell, Careers
Dr Sarah Jones (Post.doc rep)
Karen Bill (Athena Swan)
Miss Sabrina Mall, (Secretary)
Paul Crossley, Strategic HR & OD

New University Research Strategy Group

Membership currently being established

University Research Committee

Prof Ian Oakes (Pro Vice Chancellor, Chair)
Prof Debra McGregor (Director, CeDARE)
Prof Laura Serrant-Green (SHaW)
Karen Bill, (Chair RCSEP)
Post Graduate Representative
Prof John Darling (Director, RIHS/Director of Research)
Prof Ken Manktelow (Chair RIHS/SAS SMB)
Patricia Fouracres (LIS)
Prof Dariusz Galasinski (Chair of Professoriate)
Prof Dew Harrison (Chair CADRE)
Prof Glynis Cousin (ILE) Chair of Women in Research
Dr Silke Machold (UWBS)
Prof Andrew Haynes (Chair LSSC SMB)
Prof Ruslan Mitkov (Director, RIILP)
Prof Michael Thelwall (Chair, RIILP SMB)
Prof Robert Newman, (Chair STech SMB)
Heather Robinson (REF Unit)
Prof Ian Sillitoe (Chair of Research Degrees Sub Committee)
Glyn Hambrook (LSSC Trans-cultural/national Research Centre)
Dr Penny Brooker (The Law Research Centre)
Prof John Walton (The Law Research Centre)
Prof John Buckley (Centre Historical Research)
Dr Sarah Jones (Post.doc Rep)
Sabrina Mall, (Secretary)

University Strategic HR Group

(Membership still being consolidated)
Steph Harris, Dir. of HR
Jean Davies, Dep. Dir. of HR
Ann Kimbley, SDU Manager
Paul Crossley, Strategic HR & OD
Gina Masters, Asst. Registrar
Cindy Williams-Findlay, EDU Manager
Sophie Williams, SU
Sheila Hind, School Manager, SAD
Andy Penco, UNISON
Meena Jeffries, UNISON
Penny Welch, UCU
Jim Davies, UCU
Mike Chamberlain, DIr. of Sport
Emma Hewitt, Strategic Planning
Dr. Kevin Hogan, Assoc. Dean of SAS
Charlotte Joseph, Head of Counselling Services
Janet Firth, UWBS
Will Foster, Assoc. Dean, SSPAL
Prof. Linda Lang, Dean of SHaW

February 2012

Glossary of terms

AGCAS	Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services
ASW	Athena Swan Work Group
CAP	Concordat Action Plan
Careers & Emp Serv (CES)	Careers & Employment Services
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CROS	Careers in Research On-line Survey
CV	Curriculum Vitae
CWG	Concordat Work Group
EDU / E&D	Equality and Diversity Unit / Equality and Diversity
FTC	Fixed-term Contract
HR	Human Resources Department
ILE	Institute of Learning Enhancement
MaC	Marketing and Communications Department
PDP	Professional Development Portfolio
PI's	Principal Investigators
PVC	Pro Vice-Chancellor
REF	Research Excellence Framework
SDU	Staff Development Unit
SET	Science, engineering, technology and the built environment
URC	University Research Committee
UW9	University of Wolverhampton pay grade (1 to 11 grade structure)
VC	Vice-Chancellor
WiRW	Women in Research Work Group

February 2012